

CLAIMS

WE CLAIM:

1. An input/output device for mounting in a vehicle having a driver seat and a passenger seat, comprising:

a housing;

an input device;

an output device for displaying information to one or more occupants of said vehicle, the output device being adapted to move between first and second positions;

an electrical circuit terminating in first and second electrical contacts, the circuit being complete when the first electrical contact is in electrical communication with the second electrical contact, the first electrical contact disposed on the output device such that the electrical circuit is complete when the output device is in the second position; and

electronics adapted to disable the input device when the output device is not in the second position.

2. An input/output device according to claim 1, wherein the second electrical contact is disposed on the housing.

3. An input/output device according to claim 1, wherein the housing defines a recess having a perimeter and the output device moves between the first and second positions substantially within the recess.

4. An input/output according to claim 3, wherein the output device has a pivot pin and the perimeter of the recess defines an opening that receives the pin such that the output device moves between the first and second positions substantially within the recess.

5. An input/output device according to claim 4, wherein the output device has a second pivot pin and the perimeter of the recess defines a second opening that receives the second pin.

6. An input/output device according to claim 1, wherein the input device comprises a plurality of buttons adapted to allow an occupant of said vehicle to enter information into said input/output device by depressing one or more of the buttons.

7. An input/output device according to claim 1, wherein the output device comprises a display screen.

8. An input/output device according to claim 7, wherein the input device comprises on-screen controls selectively displayed on the display screen.

9. An input/output device according to claim 1, wherein the first position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

10. An input/output device according to claim 9, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is not within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

11. An input/output device of claim 10, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said passenger seat.

12. An input/output device mounted in a vehicle having a driver seat and a passenger seat, comprising:

a housing;

electronics;

a switch having activated and inactivated positions;

an input device; and

an output device for displaying information to one or more occupants of said vehicle, the output device being adapted to move between first and second positions;

wherein the switch is disposed on the housing such that the output device moves the switch into the activated position when the output device moves from the first position to the second position, and wherein the electronics disable the input device when the switch is not in the activated position.

13. An input/output device according to claim 12, wherein the first position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

14. An input/output device according to claim 13, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is not within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

15. An input/output device according to claim 14, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said passenger seat.

16. An input/output device mounted in a vehicle having a driver seat and a passenger seat, comprising:

a housing defining a recess;

an input device;

an output device for displaying information to one or more occupants of said vehicle, the output device being adapted to move between first and second positions substantially within the recess;

means for detecting the presence of the output device in the second position; and

means for disabling the input device when the output device is not in the second position.

17. An input/output device according to claim 16, wherein the first position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

18. An input/output device according to claim 17, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is not within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

19. An input/output device according to claim 18, wherein the second position is such that information displayed on the output device is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said passenger seat.

20. A method of restricting input into an input/output device mounted within a vehicle having driver and passenger seats, said input/output device having a housing defining a recess, an input device and an output device adapted to move between first and second positions substantially within the recess, the method comprising:

determining whether information displayed by the output device is within a zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat;

disabling said input device if the information is within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat; and

enabling said input device if the information is not within the zone of vision of an occupant of said driver seat.

21. The method in accordance with claim 20, further comprising determining if said vehicle is in motion and enabling said input device if said vehicle is not in motion.

22. A method of restricting input into an input/output device mounted within a vehicle, said input/output device having a housing defining a recess, an input device and an output device adapted to move between first and second positions substantially within the recess, the method comprising:

determining if said output device is in said second position;

disabling said input device if said output device is not in said second position; and

enabling said input device if said output device is in said second position.

23. A method in accordance with claim 22, further comprising determining if said vehicle is in motion and enabling said input device if said vehicle is not in motion.

24. A method of restricting input into an input/output device mounted within a vehicle, said input/output device having a housing defining a recess, an input device and an output device adapted to move between first and second positions substantially within the recess, the method comprising:

determining if said vehicle is in motion;

determining if said output device is in said second position; and

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disabling said input device if said output device is not in said second position and said vehicle is in motion.

25. A method in accordance with claim 24, further comprising enabling said input device if said output device is in said second position.

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26. A method in accordance with claim 25, further comprising enabling said input device if said vehicle is not in motion.

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